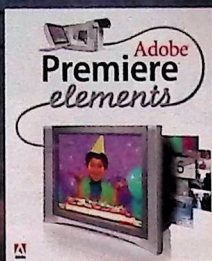


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January 2005

Number 1

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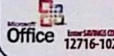


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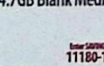


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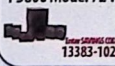


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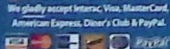
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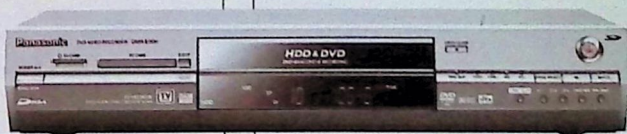
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Toshiba's "portable" multimedia media laptop

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For the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) held in January in the Las Vegas Convention Center, the bulk of the tech industry (including those whose job it is to report on it) descend on "Sin City" to get the lay of the tech landscape for the year and beyond. It's like a debutant ball where tech companies present their assets in an attempt to woo journalists and analysts to their way of thinking. The analogy ends there however as industry types on the whole don't wear lace dresses or talk with a charming Southern drawl. More than a few dollars no doubt change hands in the casinos too, though the exchange is almost entirely one way. So what do we expect to see on the no doubt colossal but still crowded show floor? Those with a keen eye and enough time to properly walk the floor will see emerging trends and some technologies we've been hearing about for some time coming into their own.

We expect multi-megapixel camera phones to have a presence, though largely as a concept and something to watch out for in the future. Some industry analysts predict more than 70 per cent of phones will have an embedded multi-megapixel camera by 2009. Megapixel camera phones, already available from some manufacturers, will likely be hawked too. We don't expect anyone to be actively discussing camera phone lens optics however, which is what's needed for megapixel plus camera phones if they're to have any chance of unseating or even properly coexisting with standard digital cameras.

Display technology is expected to be big news. Every consumer technology manufacturer and, more importantly, user is searching for a high resolution, low cost, bright, colourful and low-drain display, especially for portable devices.

OLED (organic light emitting diode) technology, notable for its low power consumption, scalability, brightness and potential low cost, will likely be seen in abundance on the floor in a variety of applications, from OLED watch faces to PDA screens, computer monitors and conceptual 40" plus televisions... and a few places we aren't actively expecting, no doubt.

Judging from the sheer number of pre-CES meeting requests and heads-up emails piling up in the inboxes of journalists around the world, 3LCD technology will be trying to seat itself as the technology to beat in home theatre and computer projectors. Blu-Ray disc technology will make its presence felt, computer manufacturers and software providers will continue their attempts to make their way into the living room. LCD panels will get flatter and wider, all manner of PC peripherals will shrink to fit among the clutter of gadgets (not to mention unfilled papers, CDs, bills, books and potted plants) gracing the desks of North American computer users... or maybe that's just my desk. Oh well, I'm leaving it behind for a week anyway.

Enjoy the issue,  
Andrew Moore-Crispin  
Editor-in-Chief

p.s. Thanks to everyone that responded to my pitiful cries for a Gmail account. HUB readers read into my subtle (as a brick wall) hints and responded en masse with account offers aplenty. I tried to respond to each invite individually but think some people may have been accidentally excluded from my thanks. You know who you are and I apologize if anyone was left out.

## Letter of the Month

The Letter of the Month comes from **Geoff Harrison** who writes: All I want to find under the tree is a Nintendo DS. Do you have any idea how hard they have been to come by? Actually, if I can get two, I could auction one off at a grossly inflated price and plunk down the heavy cash required for an import PSP (PlayStation Portable) too. Hmm...

For his letter, Geoff wins a Konica Minolta 3.2 megapixel Dimage E323 digital camera.

This month, in addition to feedback on the issue, tell us: **have you made any high-tech New Year's resolutions... and have you broken them yet?** Send us your thoughts and general rants and raves: [letters@ppublishing.ca](mailto:letters@ppublishing.ca). The Letter of the Month will receive a copy of Microsoft Digital Images Suite 10, a complete photo editing and organizing suite. Merge both horizontal and vertical photos into beautiful panoramas with Intelligent Panoramic Stitching, add life to photos with Photo Story 2.0 and easily store, archive, burn and share your pictures. [www.microsoft.com/imaging](http://www.microsoft.com/imaging)



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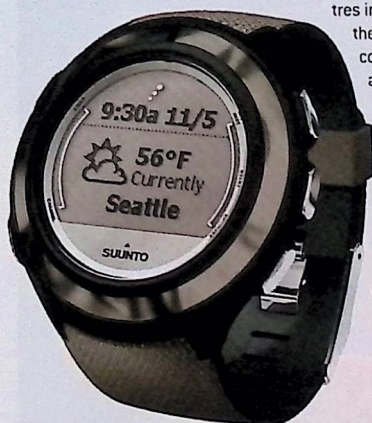
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Suunto, one of the first to market with MSN Direct smart watches (or wristops, as the company likes to call them), recently unveiled the latest in its Direct line.

The n3i is similar in ability and overall appearance to its older brother the n3 but with a slimmer and more svelte case, the company says. With a subscription to MSN Direct (about \$80 per year), users can have weather, news, sports updates, stock tickers and a host of other info beamed to a compatible watch in major city centres in North America over the FM band. Factor in the cost of the watch, approximately \$360 (from US\$299) and it's clear that the technology is still in the deep-pocketed early adopter stage... no matter how handy weather updates on your wrist may prove. [www.suunto.com](http://www.suunto.com)



**Suunto n3i**



personal info.

The 353MB file can be downloaded from <http://www.rockstargames.com/classics/index.html>, along with the game that started the series and Wild Metal, a 3D strategy vehicular combat game originally released in 1999. The games are offered up as part of the Rockstar Classics series and are optimized for current PC (only) hardware. For those unfamiliar with the early days of the series however, don't expect a 3D free-roaming game as with GTA: 3, Vice City and San Andreas. The original titles were top-down perspective games with less freedom than characterizes the more recent iterations.

**Grand Theft Auto 2 a steal**

Straight outta Compton (where Belkin is headquartered), the SnapNType is among the first accessories for Dell's powerful yet well-priced handheld X3 line of personal digital assistants (PDAs). As the name suggests, the product allows users to snap the mini QWERTY keyboard into the bottom of a compatible PDA and, you guessed it, type.

It should be noted that balance in the hand is always an issue with bottom-mounted after-market keyboards. The unit draws the little power it uses from the handheld itself, eliminating the need for extra batteries. Thumb keyboards are handy for PDA use beyond quick notes or for jotting down appointments; for word processing and instant messaging applications, some sort of text interface beyond tap and type or Graffiti-style text entry is all but requisite.



**Belkin SnapNType**

Victorinox (<http://www.victorinox.com>), makers of the official Swiss Army knife, have given the famously durable pocket utility tool a digital twist. Now, in addition to having a fold-out knife, key ring, screwdriver, scissors, and nail file, the SwissMemory model also comes with a detachable USB flash drive and red LED light housed in a chic translucent red casing.

The flash drive is attached to the rest of the tool via a hook, and can be unattached completely if the need arises — while going through airport security, for example, where knives and scissors are generally frowned upon.

The drive comes in 64, 128, 256 and 512MB sizes, and the tool ranges in price accordingly from approximately \$70 to \$190 (from US\$59 to \$159).



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## Press play

### Toshiba's "portable" multimedia media laptop

There was a time when a TV was a TV and a computer was a computer, but those days are gone. I suppose I should have realized it the day my satellite terminal froze up and I realized I was essentially rebooting my television.

The final proof is the Media Center PC, a concept I sort of like and yet couldn't quite get into. Sure, I like the idea that I can watch and record TV, listen to music and play movies on a computer with an operating system optimized for those particular tasks. But I've never liked the idea of parking \$2500 worth of computer in my living room, or — here we go again — booting up my stereo or DVD player.

And now there's Toshiba's Qosmio line of Media Center laptops, which eliminates both of my complaints. Actually, "laptop" is a bit of a misnomer — at 40.6 cm by 28.5 cm, and weighing in at 4.4 kg, I would probably need two lops to support the Qosmio G10-GP2 I received to review. Maybe that's why Toshiba refers to it on the box as a portable computer instead of a laptop. That's fair, because it is quite portable, though sometimes a bit awkward. For a week, I set up the Qosmio in different parts of the house, watching cable TV and DVDs and listening to music wherever it struck my fancy. "Set up," by the way, generally means "open and turn on," as the Qosmio is self-contained (though you'll have to remember to bring the adapter to connect a TV's coaxial cable).

You'll note that I said "turn on" and not "boot up." Knocking down my other pet peeve, the entire Qosmio line includes the QosmioPlayer — a trademarked way of saying you don't have to bother to start Windows to watch or listen to DVDs, TV or CDs. Just push the appropriate button above the



### Qosmio G10-GP2

Toshiba Canada <http://www.toshiba.ca> Street price: \$3499

**Pros:** A convenient way to tote a DVD player, television, and stereo system under your arm with a minimum of fuss. An excellent all-in-one for the college student living in cramped conditions.

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keyboard and you immediately start up a dedicated player. In a head-to-head test between the Qosmio and my DVD player, the time between powering up and the DVD menu appearing was almost the same. The Qosmio's TV tuner actually took less time to give me an image than my TV. The G10-GP2 is the flagship of the Qosmio line, and it shows. Ordinary computing tasks hummed along nicely with its 1.8 GHz Pentium M processor, 512MB of DDR RAM, and combined 100GB of hard disk space (for storing all those recorded Lost episodes). It includes a CD/DVD writer that handles every format you can throw at it (including DVD-RAM), Harmon/Kardon speakers, and a bevy of connectors including 4 USB 2.0

ports, composite and S-Video inputs and outputs and S/PDIF, FireWire, modem, Ethernet and RGB connectors. It also sports both 802.11g and Bluetooth connectivity. Most noticeable, though, is the bright, clear 17" [diagonal] widescreen LCD, sporting a resolution of 1440x960. It was so bright and clear that a defect became startlingly obvious: watching from about four feet away, I could clearly see upscaling and MPEG artefacts on my Firefly DVD. This only plagued QosmioPlayer; watching the same DVD from within Windows didn't produce the same quirks. Sitting a bit further back largely eliminated the problem, but it seems odd that with everything else going for the Qosmio, something so noticeable should slip through. But then, my mother always did say I sat too close to the TV.

Emru Townsend

## Finding the right laptop bag

One of the more frustrating aspects of buying an odd-sized laptop is trying to find an appropriate carrying case. Something that looks right in a store might result in your laptop sliding around inside - or not fitting at all. The Targus website helps you narrow down your options quickly with the Case Compatibility Wizard (<http://www.targus.com/cancompatibilitysearch.asp>), which quickly tells you which of their products matches your computer. You can enter a specific model or, if it's not listed, its dimensions. Be warned, however, that sometimes your find cases that are a little too big - though in the case of the Qosmio G10, that's not terribly likely.



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<p><b>Intel Centrino-1.7G (M3NP)</b> \$1399</p> <p>12.1 TFT, 512MB, 40G HDD, DVD-CDRW, 56K LAN, 1394, 4 USB2.0, WLAN, Ultra Slim &amp; Thin, 4.5lb, 5.5Hrs, Upgrade to DVD+RW Add: \$70</p>	<p><b>Free</b> 50 pack CD-R with System purchase over \$500 (Before Tax)</p> <p><b>New Year Special</b></p> <p><b>17" CRT Included Intel P4-3.0G</b> \$689</p> <p>512M DDR-400 RAM 80GB 7200RPM HDD NEC 16x DVD+/-RW Video, Sound, LAN Free Keyboard, Mouse, Speaker</p> <p>Add 17" CRT \$459</p>	<p><b>Intel P4 C-2.6G</b> \$329</p> <p>256M DDR RAM 80GB 7200RPM HDD 52x32x52 CD-RW Video, Sound, LAN Free Keyboard, Mouse, Speaker</p> <p>Add 17" CRT \$459</p>	<p><b>Intel P4-3.0G (M755)</b> \$699</p> <p>ASUS P5P800 M/B 512M DDR-400 RAM 160GB 7200RPM HDD NEC 16x DVD+/-RW ATI 9250 128MB Video 8-channel Sound, LAN</p> <p>Add 17" LCD \$1019</p>	<p><b>Intel P4-3.2G</b> \$999</p> <p>512M DDR-400 RAM 160GB 7200RPM HDD Pioneer 16x DVD+/-RW Video, Sound, LAN 450W Gaming Case Upgrade to 19" LCD Mouse, Speaker +\$200</p> <p>17" LCD Included</p>	<p><b>AMD S-2200+</b> \$279</p> <p>ECS Mainboard 256MB DDR RAM 80GB 7200RPM HDD 52x32x52 CD-RW 64MB Video Shared 6-ch Sound, LAN</p> <p>Add 17" LCD \$819</p>
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# Domestic robots

*From manufacturing to personal butler?*

A recent United Nations survey suggests the use of domestic robots in the home will increase sevenfold by 2007.

But we may be 10 to 25 years away from building really useful, multi-tasking robots for domestic chores. And when we build them, pundits say, they may have unintended consequences.

The UN's World Robotic Survey, released in October, says there were more than 600,000

domestic robots in use around the world at the end of 2003. Nearly all of those were lawn mowing and vacuum cleaning robots, and most – 400,000 – were installed in 2003.

The report predicts that due to falling prices, by 2007 we will have about 4.1 million domestic robots in our homes. It suggests that automated vacuum cleaners will make up the majority of these, but

that sales of window washers and pool cleaners will also rise. Yet these are all robots with "operations that are unique and repetitive," says Andrew Goldenberg, a robotics engineer and the CEO of Toronto-based robotics company Engineering Services Inc.

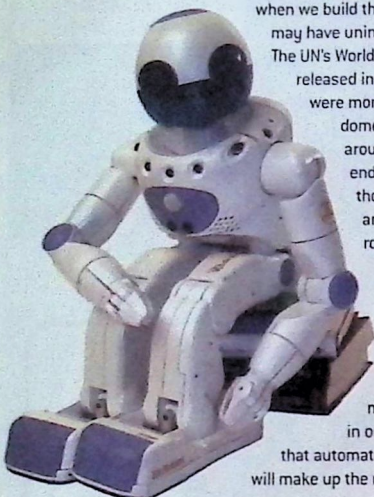
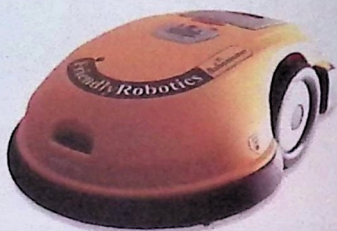
The really impressive innovations will come when household robots can switch from task to task and do them as well as, or better than, humans, he says. Think of Rosie, the maid from the futuristic *Jetsons* cartoon of the 1960s.

"I don't want to diminish what's been done, but these [vacuum cleaners and lawnmowers] are still not great leaps forward," says Goldenberg, who predicts it'll be another 10 to 25 years before we build multi-tasking robots.

"People may ask, 'Why so long? Things are moving much faster.' My answer is that resources all over the world – humans and money – are allocated elsewhere. Biomedical applications are priorities. It's more important to find a cure for cancer or Alzheimer's."

When it comes to domestic robots, Goldenberg says the most promising applications will probably be in the kitchen. He's talking about a robot that can cook dinner and load the dishwasher.

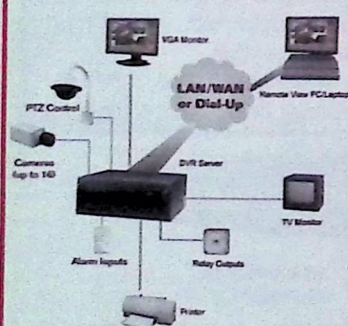
However, social commentators warn that we must consider the unantici-



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pated consequences of such innovation. Mark Federman, chief strategist at the University of Toronto's McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology, points to the refrigerator.

He says the introduction of the fridge meant we could buy our food in bulk and keep it fresher longer. That in turn meant we no longer needed to go to the market every day, freeing up time to work longer hours. And since we could now plan meals in advance, it was easy to bring lunch to work rather than go home for lunch, creating even more time for work.

"What (Marshall) McLuhan said famously is that we shape our tools and

thereafter our tools shape us," says Federman. "When domestic robots are introduced, we will start to change the way we engage, not with robots, but with each other." Toronto-based business strategist and futurist J.P. Wade worries about the implications for low-wage workers. "These labour-saving devices will be, for quite awhile, very expensive. So they'll be available to people who are able to hire people to do these

tasks for them. So we're perhaps doing damage to people on the lower-end of the wage scale," she says.

But Wade sees advantages too. "Robots in the home will make less and less of the disabilities that people have. Perhaps robots can go up and down the stairs for you. I mean, the minute you sit down, you realize you need something, and where is it? Upstairs," she says.

Still, even someone such as Goldenberg, who engineers robots, is adamant that they have limited applications. "I'll never think of a robot as a replacement for a human being as far as care and understanding goes. I think that's nonsense. It's a machine made out of nuts and bolts and metal, not soul."

By Sharon Oosthoek



## Industrial Robots

Industrial robots, those working in car manufacturing for example, account for the vast majority of robots in use around the world.

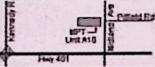
The latest UN World Robotic Survey says there are at least 800,000 units, and possibly as many as one million. Soon there will be many more. Worldwide sales are forecast to rise from nearly 82,000 industrial robots in 2003 to more than 106,000 units in 2007. That's an increase of 7% per year.

The world leader in robotics is Japan. "In Japan, there is a culture of automation. They're willing to automate anything. In the U.S., it's a decision based on profit," says Andrew Goldenberg, a robotics engineer and CEO of Toronto-based robotics company Engineering Services Inc. That's certainly borne out by the numbers. At the end of 2003, there were 350,000 industrial robots operating in Japan, close to 250,000 in Europe and about 112,000 in North America.

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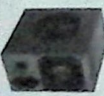
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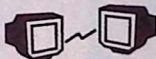
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## One-button wonderment

*Artificial intelligence or old-fashioned obstinance?*

The Jetsons got it right. Not about the flying cars — I'm still waiting for those — but for the basic notion that technology, while convenient, starts to cause trouble the moment it tries to get creative.

Case in point: Roxio's VideoWave 7 includes CineMagic and StoryBuilder, two wizards that claim to take the hard work out of making videos. The idea is simple: you worry about acquiring the footage and audio, then let either of these programs do the hard work of editing it together.

This strikes me as very, very wrong.

Maybe it's because I'm a former film animation student. Maybe it's because one of my favourite tasks was sitting in front of a Steenbeck editing deck and cutting together spools of 16mm film to compress everything down to a single, coherent idea. Maybe it's because, at heart, I'm a control freak.

Maybe. But I doubt it.

I dug up a mini-DV tape with 39 minutes of raw footage of a week in my son Max's life from 2002. As an experiment, I fed CineMagic the captured footage, selected a four-minute clip of ambient music, selected "Highlight" as the editing style, and let it go to work.

At the end of it, I looked at the screen in horror. What I got was a seemingly random collection of sequences from throughout the tape, each about thirty seconds long, stitched together by video transitions that were cutting-edge in 1987.

I tried again, this time with a remix of the Beastie Boys' "Alive" as my audio clip and "Fun and Fast" as the style. There were several dynamic scenes of Max running, jumping, and climbing so I figured there would be plenty to work with. What I got was, again, a seemingly random collection of sequences (about a third of which involved those dynamic scenes), only this time they were slightly sped up to keep everything peppy.

Exasperated, I tried using the same footage with StoryBuilder. I didn't have the option of selecting my own audio clip, but I could select from one of six categories (I chose "Moments in Time") and one of eight templates (I chose "Family Memories"). What I got was a generic title sequence meant to evoke history and a music loop (with plenty of generic piano, meant to evoke sentimental memory) that kept fading in and out over the video. This, I thought, must be what Ken Burns's first home movies looked like.





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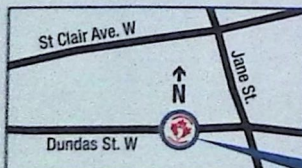
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[To Roxio's credit, CineMagic and StoryBuilder provide opportunities to modify their work. But doesn't that sort of defeat the purpose?] As I see it, the problem is fundamental: a computer knows nothing of the emotional resonance of an image. When the tape comes to an image of Max almost mad with glee as he's surrounded by soap bubbles, I see the unbridled joys of childhood, his immersion in sensory experience as a bubble pops and showers him with tiny droplets. I see all the little visual cues and remember what we were doing the week before, and what happened the week after. But all a computer sees is a collection of ones and zeroes describing 345,600 pixels per frame. It sees that the collection of ones and zeroes from the previous frame is arranged differently and, through some mechanism I'm not privy to, it decides that there should be a new scene there. And by sorting through 39 minutes of raw footage to create a four-minute video, that same mechanism has effectively decided which 35 minutes of memory aren't quite so important. Now why should I let anyone, especially a machine, decide that for me?

By Emru Townsend

## And it doesn't stop with videos . . .

Before there was CineMagic, there was Microsoft Word's AutoSummarize feature, designed to automatically extract the most important sentences in a document, constrained only by a limit you set on the summary's size. Word's online help warns that the resulting summary may "serve as a starting point or rough draft that you need to improve." No kidding. I tried it out on Project Gutenberg's text of Cinderella (<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1599>), asking it to give me a 100-word summary of the story. The result: "Cinderella, would you not be glad to go to the ball?" "Y—es," cried Cinderella, with a great sigh. Being at a loss for a coachman, Cinderella said: "Thou art in the right," replied her Godmother. The fairy then said to Cinderella: Cinderella seemed very indifferent in the matter. When the two sisters returned from the ball Cinderella asked them if they had been well diverted and if the beautiful Princess had been there. Then Cinderella shyly begged that she might try. Cinderella's stepsisters were present at the feast, but in the place of honor sat the fairy Godmother. The Coles Notes people have nothing to fear.



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# Photoblogs:

## public pictorials for people of all skill levels

As most of us know, blogs [short for Web logs] are a modern technology-infused means of recording the particulars of one's day-to-day existence—sort of a public, online diary. Most blogs are text-based. Using pictures as a primary means of expression on a blog is a relatively new phenomenon, and has been dubbed "photoblogging".

Photoblogging began as people started to add images to their blogs. As digital cameras became more popular, it became more practical and appealing to add pictures to the text. Before long, blogs without any text at all began to pop up. The current trend in photoblogging is to combine images with personal captions.

Miles Storey, a Web designer based in the U.K., has been keeping a photoblog since Spring 2004 (<http://mute.rigent.com/>). A keen traveler and amateur photographer, Storey has taken more than 12,000 photographs over the last three years and wanted to share them.

"I was looking for a way to put my photographs on the Web," says Storey. "I was always planning complicated gallery sites that never saw completion. When I discovered photoblogging I knew it was right for me."

Storey found photoblogging through [www.photoblogs.org](http://www.photoblogs.org), the first and largest photoblogging community portal with more than 6,000 registered users. It provides resources for fledgling photobloggers and a means for people to promote their photoblog among others with similar interests. Storey believes he has received invaluable support and encouragement from the photoblog community. "People are very kind; the community spirit amongst bloggers is impressive," he says. "The comments left at my site are constructive and I have made several new friends through mutual

interests and admiration. One generous photoblogger even sent me an old camera I had mentioned I was looking for."

Gayla Trail, a Toronto-based designer, writer and artist, also enjoys the community atmosphere she has experienced with her photoblog ([www.makinghappy.com](http://www.makinghappy.com)). "Overall the reactions have been very generous, encouraging and thoughtful," she says. "I've actually been surprised and moved to tears at times by how much people have shared in return." Trail began her site not as a photoblog, but rather as something she calls an online sketchbook. "I left it open-ended to include writing, illustration, and photographs," she says. "It just so happens that I experienced a renewed excitement in film photography around the time I started this particular site and so it evolved into a photoblog naturally." Chicago native Bob Smith began his photoblog ([www.notraces.com](http://www.notraces.com)) after a trip to Cuba. "I wanted to do something more with [my photos] than just emailing them to friends, or printing and hanging them

## Photoblog sites

### Sites to get you started with your photoblog

[www.blogger.com/](http://www.blogger.com/)  
<http://photoblogger.helot.de/>  
[www.pixelpunk.se/software/](http://www.pixelpunk.se/software/)  
[www.movabletype.org/](http://www.movabletype.org/)

### Photoblogging communities

[www.photoblogs.org](http://www.photoblogs.org)  
[www.gtebloggers.com](http://www.gtebloggers.com)  
[www.blogscanada.ca](http://www.blogscanada.ca)

### Examples of popular photoblogs

[www.durhamtownship.com/](http://www.durhamtownship.com/)  
[www.chromasia.com/vlog/](http://www.chromasia.com/vlog/)  
<http://vlon.nu/>  
<http://photos.housserdesign.com/>  
<http://bible.holeinmyhead.net/>  
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[www.photojunkie.ca](http://www.photojunkie.ca)

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in my home," he explains. "I wanted a wider audience to see the beauty of Cuba through the images I took."

An amateur photographer for 30 years, Smith shares the common belief held within the photoblogging community that photoblogs help make people better photographers. "I can look at the body of work I've posted over the last year and see a marked change in how I'm seeing the world I photograph," said Smith. "I think that's one of the big pluses of a photoblog - it's a visual record of your efforts."

Smith is committed to posting at least one image per day, which takes dedication and likely contributes to the steady stream of visitors to his site. Storey agrees that one of the key ingredients to becoming part of the world's photoblogging community is "to have a continuous supply of photographs to keep your site up-to-date." However, he's quick to point out that people ought not to be shy when showcasing their artistic ability. "The quality of the images you post are of secondary importance to what they mean to you," says Storey. "Some people post old postcards they find in garage sales, others post snapshots they take of their families. Think of a photoblog as a living album."

Setting up a photoblog is as easy as heading to [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) and signing up for a free blog. Once the blog is created, simply follow the directions for adding images (it requires a quick software download). The entire process takes less than 10 minutes.

Prospective photobloggers who are looking for a more personalized look can surf to [www.blogstyles.com/photo/tutorial.php](http://www.blogstyles.com/photo/tutorial.php) for a complete tutorial on photoblogging - though keep in mind that custom photoblogs require a webspace provider to store photo files, which usually start at around \$5 per month.

By Chad Sapieha

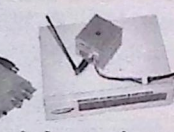
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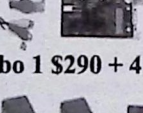
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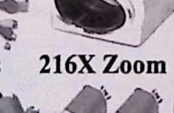
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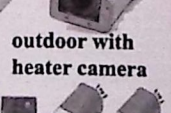
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Digital trading cards may very well make cardboard a thing of the past. Serious CD sports Cardz ([www.serious.com](http://www.serious.com)) are card-shaped CD-ROMs packed with 80MB of interactive video and audio content on any given athlete – that's quite an improvement on a traditional sports card's single still picture with a few stats crammed onto the back.

There are 60 Cardz in the now-available NBA series, with an NFL series scheduled for August. The Cardz are sold "blind" (meaning you can't see which ones you're getting) in packs of three

for US\$9.99, and each one comes with a soft plastic sleeve to prevent scratching. Despite the odd 3.3x2.5 inch rectangular shape, Cardz fit any standard Windows or Mac CD-ROM drive, though not slot-loading drives. When inserted into a computer, the Card auto-loads a browser-like window where viewers can peruse a player's stats, skills and biography, watch snippets of highlight reel video footage and answer trivia questions to unlock goodies like wallpapers and screensavers. Packed with data and tastefully presented, CD Cardz are a great idea for sports fans and collec-

tors alike – the only thing missing is the stick of bubble gum.



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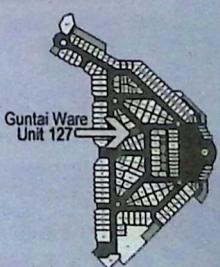
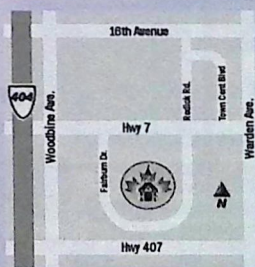
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# Photo printers deliver image quality

If the four printers in this roundup indicate the current state of printer technology, we can safely conclude that print quality is no longer an issue. Any of these printers is capable of making 4x6 snapshots that are indistinguishable from what you'd expect from a commercial photo-finisher. These printers also delivered 8x10 glossies that are good enough to frame and hang on a wall. The good colour is partly due to the fact that all of these printers use at least six separate inks to render colour (HP and Epson use eight).

So, it comes down to price and other features. Three useful features that the Canon, HP and Lexmark models have are PictBridge support, a built-in colour screen and memory card readers. PictBridge is one of those rare instances of industry co-operation. It allows cameras from one manufacturer to control printers from another manufacturer for computerless printing. Our Fujifilm FinePix S3100 test camera sent print commands to all the printers without incident. If all you want are snapshots, built-in card readers provide one of the simplest ways to get prints. The colour LCD screen lets you see the images and access menus to crop the image,

conduct minor corrections, or control variables such as print size and number of copies.

These units printed a test group of five 4x6 snaps in average times of just under two minutes to about three minutes per print. For high-resolution 8x10 prints, times ranged from just over three minutes to just under 5.5 minutes. Canon was the speed champ in both tests; Lexmark trailed in both. Still, even the slowest time is quite an improvement over printer speeds of a few years ago, where an 8x10 might take a dozen minutes to print.

All printers come with support for Windows and Macintosh computers, and use USB 2.0. The Epson unit also has a FireWire port, while the HP unit comes with built-in Ethernet.

## Pixma iP6000D

From: Canon Canada

Canon's Pixma iP6000D has a lot going for it, working equally well connected to a computer or as a standalone print station. The onboard utilities are extensive. For example, one utility prints nine variations of a photo with different colour balance settings on a single sheet. After you

inspect the sheet, you can select the most pleasing one for the final print. Another utility allows you to crop an image before printing. This Pixma is styled to shed the image of inkjet printers as being just computer peripherals. When not in use, everything folds up to form a pleasantly-sculpted closed box of indeterminate identity.

## Stylus Photo R800

From: Epson Canada

The Epson R800 has neither a memory card reader nor a colour screen (other Epson printers do), but has its own set of distinct features including a paper roll holder (Epson sells photo paper on rolls) and a special carrier that allows you to print directly onto a CD or DVD.

And then there are the pigment-based inks, which have been shown (in independent accelerated aging tests) to last several decades. The permanence of dye-based inks has improved considerably, but Epson still has a big following among serious printmakers. In the R800 Epson also uses red and blue inks, an unusual departure from the usual CMYK variations.

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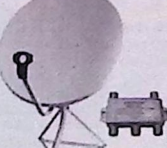
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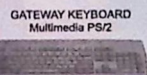


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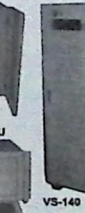
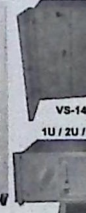
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# Your Technology Distributor



## PhotoSmart 8450

From: Hewlett-Packard Canada

If the HP 8450 were a person it would be an enthusiastic "we can do anything" kind of personality. It's big – about the same size as a tabloid printer, even though it's a letter/legal printer. Although it could function as a single-user printer, the HP 8450 comes with an Ethernet port so it's ideally suited as a shared resource for a family that has networked multiple computers. It will also accept an optional duplexing mechanism for automatic two-sided printing.

Nevertheless it also works well as a stand-alone print station, with an extensive set of built-in utilities that allow you to choose printing options and even conduct minor image correction.



## P915 Home Photo Printer

From: Lexmark Canada

Lexmark's new P915 is a compact and cleanly-styled inkjet that works equally well tethered to a computer or as a stand-alone print station. In fact, its tidy proportions allow it to sit unobtrusively in the family room, or even on the kitchen counter – it doesn't have to be next to the computer. Like the other models with card readers, you have access to a set of print and image correction utilities from the onboard LCD screen, including crop, rotate and colour correction which simplifies computerless printing. It's the least expensive printer in this roundup; it's also the slowest, but in that mix image quality doesn't get sacrificed.

By David Tanaka



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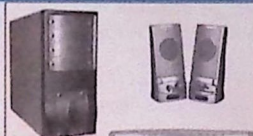


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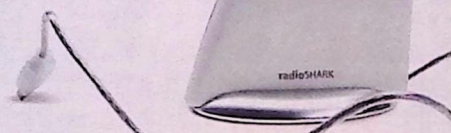
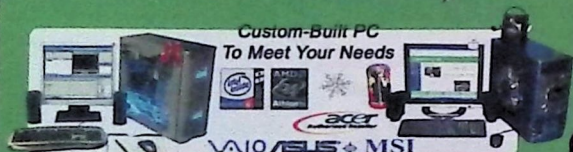
With its stylish silver fin-shaped antenna, the radioSHARK will add AM/FM radio to your Mac or PC - provided the Mac is running OS X 10.2.8 or higher and the PC is running Windows XP, that is. Connected with and powered by USB (negating the extra power-supply cable and resulting desk clutter), the radioSHARK can record radio broadcasts in real time or can be programmed to record to a preset schedule.

Using a technique called "time-shift recording", it's also possible to pause a live broadcast and return to it later, picking up right from where you left off.

Recorded broadcasts can be transferred to any AIFC-compatible digital music player (i.e. iPod).

RadioSHARK also comes with an application that will store station presents, scan for new radio stations and add them to a favourites list, and control all radio and scheduled recording functions.

The radioSHARK can be purchased directly from the Griffin Technology website (<http://www.griffintechnology.com>) for about \$85 (from US\$69.99).

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AMD Sempron 2800+	\$684.99 or \$33/mth
AMD Sempron 3000+	\$719.99 or \$33/mth
AMD Athlon XP 3200+	\$1134.99 or \$42/mth
AMD Athlon XP 3200+	\$1029.99 or \$33/mth
Intel Celeron D 330L	\$679.99 or \$25/mth
Intel Celeron D 340L	\$719.99 or \$25/mth
Intel Celeron D 340L	\$729.99 or \$27/mth
Intel Pentium 4-530	\$704.99 or \$29/mth
Intel Pentium 4-540	\$839.99 or \$31/mth
Intel Pentium 4-550	\$914.99 or \$34/mth
Intel Pentium 4-560J	\$929.99 or \$35/mth

## PREMIER CHOICE GOLD

1 Asus A7V-MX & D1a Motherboard for AMD Socket A  
or Asus P5P03-MX Motherboard for Intel Socket 475  
1 Pentium® 3.5" 1.44MB HD Floppy Disk Drive  
120GB ATA-100 Hard Disk Drive w/ 7200RPM w/ 16MB  
1 64MB DDR RAM PC2700, 160MB SDRAM Memory  
1 Enlight Mid-Tower Case w/ 7 Bays & 2 Front USB  
1 Enlight True 350W ATX Power Supply  
4 2.5 USB Ports, 1 Parallel & 1 Serial Port  
1 Asus X800-MT HD Graphics Card 128MB  
1 LG SCSI-4160 DVD-RW Drive w/ Software  
1 On Board 6-Channel Digital Surround Sound  
1 Realtek A810 6TS w/ 6 Speakers & Subwoofer  
1 Realtek 56K Mod. VoiceFax Modem w/ 56K PCI  
1 On Board 10/100 PCI Max Elite Network Adapter  
1 Streaming 750KB 17" Digital 200Hz CRT Monitor  
1 Keyboard, 104 Enhanced Soft-Touch Keyboard  
1 Microsoft Wheel Mouse Optical Mouse w/ Pad  
1 MS Windows XP Home OEM w/ CD and Manual  
5 Years Labour & 1 Year Parts Warranty

AMD Sempron 2400+	\$1219.99 or \$45/mth
AMD Sempron 2500+	\$1234.99 or \$45/mth
AMD Sempron 2600+	\$1249.99 or \$45/mth
AMD Sempron 2800+	\$1264.99 or \$45/mth
AMD Sempron 3000+	\$1279.99 or \$47/mth
AMD Sempron 3000+	\$1299.99 or \$47/mth
AMD Athlon XP 3200+	\$1484.99 or \$51/mth
Intel Celeron D 335L	\$1254.99 or \$44/mth
Intel Celeron D 335L	\$1269.99 or \$44/mth
Intel Celeron D 335L	\$1284.99 or \$47/mth
Intel Celeron D 340L	\$1304.99 or \$47/mth
Intel Pentium 4-530	\$1309.99 or \$50/mth
Intel Pentium 4-540	\$1414.99 or \$52/mth
Intel Pentium 4-550	\$1489.99 or \$55/mth
Intel Pentium 4-560J	\$1579.99 or \$55/mth

## PREMIER CHOICE BLACK

1 Asus A7V-MX & D1a Motherboard for AMD Socket A  
or Asus P5P03-MX Motherboard for Intel Socket 475  
1 Pentium® 3.5" 1.44MB HD Floppy Disk Drive  
120GB ATA-100 Hard Disk Drive w/ 7200RPM w/ 16MB  
1 64MB DDR RAM PC2700, 160MB SDRAM Memory  
1 Enlight Mid-Tower Case w/ 7 Bays & 2 Front USB  
1 Enlight True 350W ATX Power Supply w/ 2 Fans  
1 Asus X800-MT HD Graphics Card 128MB  
1 LG SCSI-4160 DVD-RW Drive w/ Software  
1 On Board 6-Channel Digital Surround Sound  
1 Realtek A810 6TS w/ 6 Speakers & Subwoofer  
1 USB Realtek 56K Internal Fax/Modem w/ 56K  
1 On Board 10/100 PCI Max Elite Network Adapter  
1 Streaming 750KB 17" Digital 200Hz CRT Monitor  
1 Keyboard, 104 Enhanced Soft-Touch Keyboard  
1 Logitech Optical Mouse w/ Wheel w/ Mouse Pad  
1 Arctic Silver 3 Thermal Compound (2x Tube)  
1 Temu Case Light Upcase Colour Available  
1 MS Windows XP Home OEM w/ CD and Manual  
5 Years Labour & 1 Year Parts Warranty

AMD Athlon 4-3000+	\$2199.99 or \$67/mth
AMD Athlon 4-3000+	\$2284.99 or \$67/mth
AMD Athlon 4-3000+	\$2349.99 or \$67/mth
AMD Athlon 4-3000+	\$2399.99 or \$67/mth
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AMD Athlon 4-3000+	\$2899.99 or \$67/mth
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AMD Athlon 4-3000+	\$3399.99 or \$67/mth
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AMD Athlon 4-3000+	\$23699.99 or \$67/mth
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# Emailing the masses

*Spam, spammers and the people who hate them*

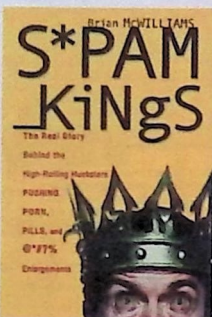
## Spam Kings: The Real Story Behind the High-Rolling Hucksters Pushing Porn, Pills, and @\*?% Enlargements

Brian McWilliams

ISBN: 0-596-00732-9 \$33.95

If you've ever wondered where the myriad emails offering lofty promises of larger manhood, discount medications, and a more svelte figure come from, you're certainly not alone. *Spam Kings: The Real Story Behind the High-Rolling Hucksters Pushing Porn, Pills, and @\*?% Enlargements* has some of the answers. Whether you're expecting slimy business types with justifications aplenty as to why "mass email marketing" is good for consumers, or equally slimy trailer dwelling shysters, you won't be disappointed. Both sides of the ongoing battle against spam are covered with plenty of focus given to independent Internet freedom fighters. In his foreword, Brian McWilliams states that most businesses jump at getting "ink" from an author. Not surprisingly, spammers are an exception to the rule. This lays the groundwork

for what readers should expect. *Spam Kings* is an investigative book. Some might call it an expose of the seedy underbelly of the Internet. It's an exploration of the world of spammers, where they get the products they push, and what they do with user information for that 0.01 per cent of people that click through. Essentially cobbled together from instant messaging chat logs, emails and a few brief interviews, much of the story comes from the spam fighters and in-depth research into the before-



spamming lives of key players. Coupled with horror stories like that of customer information – including credit card numbers – sitting online for even a novice Internet user to see and we

have the makings of an interesting book. That said, the story feels too drawn out and pedantic at times. While it may not have been easy, I would have preferred the "Spam Kings" themselves to take a more central role – a reasonable expectation given the subtitle's claim to the "real story." Anonymity is the safety blanket of any spammer, however, and while much is heard about the growing problem of spam, little is heard of the people behind the scourge. I can't imagine that not one spammer – whether active or reformed – was willing to talk. There's nothing disinteresting about a part Jewish neo Nazi cum online auctioneer cum spammer. Distasteful, perhaps, but not disinteresting. However any insight given into the secret inner circles of bulk mail retailers comes in the form of trivia. Our aforementioned neo Nazi stores wads of cash in various hidey holes in and around his home, had a peak 1998 rating from the US Chess Federation (that's good) and is now a survivalist, for example. Truly getting the spammers' yet unheard perspective might have pushed *Spam Kings* above its current resting place: interesting but certainly not fascinating.

By Andrew Moore-Crispin

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# Tapeless Wonders

## Hybrid camcorders commit everything to memory

Compared to a MiniDV tape, memory cards are teeny, so a camera based around cards can be smaller than even the smallest DV camcorder. Solid-state memory is arguably more durable and reliable than tape, which requires a mechanical transport system. While memory cards are today relatively expensive and don't hold much data, prices continue to fall while capacity rises. In short, tapeless video recording may not yet be mainstream, but it has arrived, as the following products demonstrate:

### D-snap SV-AV50

This D-snap (there are three other models in the line) is the same size as a typical cell phone, but combines a two megapixel still camera, video camcorder, voice memo recorder and MP3 player.

**From:** Panasonic **Price:** Approx \$730  
(from US\$599.99) **Video file format:** ASF

**Pro:** Small and sleek, innovative case design, high "gee-whiz" factor  
**Con:** Small controls may be difficult for some users, limited video and still capability, no optical zoom, relatively expensive

The design is quite clever. A pivoting slice is attached to the main body by a hinge about three-quarters of the way from the top, and as the side holding the display swings out in one direction, the top of the slice, which holds the

lens assembly, swings out on the opposite side. The LCD screen can then be rotated on a separate hinge. One button controls record or playback, while a mode button cycles between the unit's four functions – still image, video, voice or music. The controls are not difficult to use but they are small. There is a rubber-domed directional control called a jog ball, which was overly sensitive and jumpy on our unit (but note that review units often take a beating). Overall, the still and video systems are pretty basic. The maximum still capture image size is two megapixels (1600 x 1200 pixels), and the lens offers a single focal length although digital zooming



is available (on still capture). You're not likely to get poster-size prints from the AV50, however image quality is good enough for snapshots. Video capture maxes out at 320x240 pixels at 30 fps with mono sound. You can connect the unit to a TV set (in the same way you'd connect a camcorder) with the supplied cable, and the video is quite acceptable. Audio is a bit weak, however. The D-snap saves the video in Windows ASF format and you have to use Panasonic's supplied SD-MovieStage in order to view the video on a computer. MovieStage contains a very rudimentary set of editing tools, so there's not much you can do out of the box with the video.

### Optio MX4

The Optio MX4 resembles neither a camcorder nor a still camera. A squared off and tapered tube forms the main body, while a battery pod sits alongside and folds downward to become a pistol grip.

**From:** Pentax **Price:** Approx \$350 (from US\$299) **Video file format:** MOV

**Pro:** Impressive 10x zoom, lots of advanced camera features  
**Con:** Zoom lever too close to the body when the handgrip is not fully rotated

The 10x zoom lens, equivalent to a 37-370 mm zoom on a 35 mm camera, contains aspheric elements and low-dispersion glass elements and a very smooth two-speed motor. The handle-mounted zoom ring is a bit too close to

the body for our liking, however. In macro mode, it will focus on objects as close as one centimetre from the lens.

The LCD screen is 1.8 inches and happily has an anti-glare coating. It's a swivel-twist design (yay!), which pops upward from the rear of the camera, but can be swivelled and then laid flat against the body, view screen facing out. A rechargeable Lithium Ion battery and charger is included but the camera will also run on commonly-available CR-V3 cells in a pinch. As a four megapixel still camera the unit offers the features comparable to other higher-end digicams, including aperture priority, shutter priority and manual mode. The camera offers three levels of JPEG and we were quite impressed with image quality in our test shots.

Movie recording is very camcorder-like. A single button starts and stops recording. There is a bit of autofocus lag when you zoom in. The MX4 saves movies in MOV format, which can be viewed directly in a QuickTime player or imported into a video editing package. Clips can be viewed directly on a TV set by connecting the camera with the supplied AV cable. Video quality over TV is very good, although our low-light shots had a lot of digital noise in them.

By David Tanaka

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### Acrobat Pro's forms formula

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access. Both the free and Pro versions were recently released in version 7.0

### Creating online forms and databases

Previously, users could create modifiable forms, however they had to maintain an independent back-end database to collect the submitted information. While Acrobat Pro 7 can still integrate with database software in the back-end, no such software is required to gather results. Users can launch Adobe Designer 7 (included) to get a grid document and tool bars with common form functions like pull-down menus, radio buttons, check boxes, and text fields.

Small business sending out customer survey forms via email is just one of a host of possible applications.

Once recipients hit the "submit" button, form data is emailed to an account



specified by the form author as a small XML file (options for printing and mailing or faxing are also covered). Forms are collected and saved in a group folder, and the results compiled and exported as a CSV file – widely readable across platforms and spreadsheet software. An option to give documents unique filenames based on

who sent them is conspicuously absent. Users must rename each file as it is pulled from email or risk writing over other forms with the same filename. The irritation factor no doubt grows exponentially as forms pile up in the inbox. Since users can specify the subject heading that the form emails will arrive with, it seems an odd decision not to include this and hurts the overall usability of this otherwise excellent element.

### Revisions

Previously, each person making on-screen edits, comments and revisions

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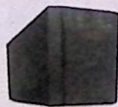


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Markham, On  
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sales@upsforless.com  
Monday - Friday : 9 - 5



was required to have the full Pro version Acrobat. While Acrobat Reader is in widespread distribution – 750 million plus – the same can't be said for Pro.

In version 7.0, Pro users can create a mark-up form to send around for edits and input and by checking a box, can unlock some of the dormant features in the free Acrobat Reader 7.0.

### Whole office solution?

While it won't replace office mainstays like Microsoft's Office suite, Acrobat

does add many useful and powerful options to post-creation document and file management.

Users can scan to PDF and email as opposed to photocopying and distributing individually, and elements of a document can be locked out, visible only to those with access privileges (similar to the concept of "management only" company documents).

If an entire relatively tech-savvy office were to commit to managing document flow with Acrobat, the paperless office of lore could prove reality.

By Andrew Moore-Crispin

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Intel P4 3.0GHz \$429

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128MB DDR RAM  
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52x CD-ROM & 1.44M FDD  
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FREE Keyboard, Mouse & Speakers

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P4-2.0/2.8/3.2 \$379/\$439/\$479

### HOT PICK \$529

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ASUS P45800 M/B  
256M DDR 400 RAM  
ATI Radeon 7000 64M  
80GB 7200rpm HDD  
52x32x52 CD-RW  
6-Channel Audio  
10/100 LAN  
1.44 FDD & ATX 350W USB CASE

Keyboard, Optical Mouse & Speaker

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ATI Radeon 9250 128M  
80GB 7200rpm 8MB  
16x DVD & 52x32x52 cdwriter  
6-Channel Audio/Gigabit LAN  
1.44 FDD & ATX 350W USB CASE

Keyboard & Optical Mouse

Shockwave SC-3 Speakers

P4 3.2 E \$679

### \*Special of the Month\*

Intel P4 530 3.0E L775

ASUS P5GD1-VM M/B (775 Socket)  
512MB Dual Channel DDR400  
SATA 120GB 7200rpm  
16x DVD+/- Rewriter  
6-Channel Audio/Gigabit LAN  
1.44 FDD & ATX 350W USB CASE

Cordless Multimedia Keyboard

Cordless Rechargeable Optical Mouse

Shockwave SC-1 Speakers

3.2E/3.4E/3.6E \$749/819/999

### AMD Sempron 2400+ \$289

AsRock K7S41-GX M/B  
128MB DDR RAM  
Real 256E 3D Graphics  
40GB 7200rpm HDD  
52x CDROM & 1.44M FDD  
5.1 Channel Audio & 10/100 LAN  
ATX 350W USB CASE

FREE Keyboard, Mouse & Speakers

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AMD Sempron 2400+

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256M DDR333 RAM  
ATI Radeon 7000 64M  
6 Channel Audio & S/PDIF  
80GB 7200rpm HDD  
1.44 FDD/10/100 M LAN  
52x32x52 CD-RW  
ATX 350W USB CASE

Keyboard, Optical Mouse & Speakers

2500/2600/2800/3000S 389/399/439/459

Change to ASUS A7N8X-X MB...+\$16

### High Gear \$589

AMD Athlon 64 3000+

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256MB DDR 400 RAM  
ATI Radeon 9250 128M TV-OUT  
80GB 7200rpm 8M Buffer  
16x DVD & 52x32x52 CD writer  
6-Channel Audio  
1.44 FDD & ATX TOWER CASE  
Keyboard & Optical Mouse

ShockWave SC-3 Speakers

CPU: 2800/3200/3400 \$595/679/759

Upgrade to 512MB DDR +\$50

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ASUS P5GD1 M/B (775 Socket)  
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ATI X300SE PCIE 128MB  
SATA 160GB 7200rpm 8M  
16x DVD+/- Rewriter  
6-Channel Audio/Gigabit LAN  
1.44 FDD & ATX 350W USB CASE

Cordless Multimedia Keyboard

Cordless Rechargeable Optical Mouse

ShockWave Sw5102 S-1 Speakers

3.0E/3.4E/3.6E \$869/989/1189

**\*\* ALL KEIT computer systems come with 1 year part and 5 years labour hardware warranty \*\***

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17" BENQ FP737/757 (after \$50 rebate) \$309/\$329  
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17" Samsung 171N/171N/171N/171N \$339/\$359/\$379/\$399  
19" BenQ FP913/FP923 (after \$50 rebate) \$519/\$539  
19" SAMSUNG 910N/913V \$509/\$559

C.R.T.  
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17" SAMSUNG 793DE/19" 997DE \$319/\$425

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ATI 9600 8M 128MB \$265/\$349  
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ATI 9600 64K 128MB \$265/\$349  
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ATI 9600 4K 128MB \$265/\$349  
ATI 9600 2K 128MB \$265/\$349  
ATI 9600 1K 128MB \$265/\$349  
ATI 9600 512K 128MB \$265/\$349  
ATI 9600 256K 128MB \$265/\$349  
ATI 9600 128K 128MB \$265/\$349  
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ATI 9600 8K 128MB \$265/\$349  
ATI 9600 4K 128MB \$265/\$349  
ATI 9600 2K 128MB \$265/\$349  
ATI 9600 1K 128MB \$265/\$349

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SB Live 24 bit/Audigy 5.1 ES \$33/49  
SB Audigy 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## Good As New Computers

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PENTIUM 3 500MHz  
256MB SDRAM  
10GB HARD DRIVE  
INT NIC, SOUND, VIDEO  
17" Grade "A" MONITOR  
WINDOWS 98SE

\$209.00

Refurbished, 90 day warranty

### DELL P3 PACKAGE

PENTIUM 3 733MHz  
128MB SDRAM  
10GB HARD DRIVE  
INT NIC, SOUND, VIDEO  
17" Grade "A" MONITOR  
WINDOWS 98SE

\$239.00

Refurbished, 90 day warranty

### DELL P3 PACKAGE

PENTIUM 3 933MHz  
256MB SDRAM  
10GB HARD DRIVE  
INT NIC, SOUND, VIDEO  
17" Grade "B" MONITOR  
WINDOWS 98SE

\$299.00

Refurbished, 90 day warranty

### DELL

P3 450  
256MB, 9GB  
CD, FDD, NIC  
KBD, MOU

\$149.00

Refurbished, 90 day warranty

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SFF P3 733  
128MB, 10GB  
CD, FDD, NIC  
KBD, MOU

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P3 733  
256MB, 20GB  
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KBD, MOU

\$209.00

Refurbished, 90 day warranty

### Compaq

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128MB, 20GB  
CD, FDD, NIC  
WIN2000

\$229.00

Refurbished, 90 day warranty

### COMPAQ

P3 866  
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CD, FDD, NIC  
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P3 933  
256MB, 10GB  
CD, FDD, NIC  
WIN2K

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P3 1000  
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WIN2000 PRO  
KBD, MOU

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Refurbished, 90 day warranty

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Tier 1  
Brand  
Grade B

\$19.99

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Tier 1  
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P780  
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## Prince of Persia: Warrior Within

Publisher: Ubisoft Developer: Ubisoft Montreal

Who is this morose beefcake and what has he done with the Prince of Persia? That's the question I asked after the opening cutscene of Warrior Within, in which an angrier and more muscular Prince snarls profanity at a mostly-naked female adversary while a Godsmack tune blares in the background.

The sequel to the critically-acclaimed Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time is a bold departure from the original in a few ways, the most obvious being the edgier tone. The story picks up several years after the first game's events, with the Prince facing death at the hands of the Dahaka beast as punishment for tampering with the Sands of Time.

Attempting to rewrite fate, the Prince discovers a way to travel back in time to stop the Empress from creating the Sands in the first place. Ultimately it's hard to see this fiercer Prince as anything beyond a generic "videogame fighting guy" — a shame, since Sands of Time had a compelling story. Fortunately the Prince is still a master of acrobatics, and uses his considerable athletic prowess to navigate the Empress's giant fortress in both the past and present using a combination of wall-running, pole-swinging, beam-balancing, and daring leaps. Aesthetic changes aside, the environmental puzzles are as intriguing and challenging as ever.

The second big departure is a greater emphasis on fighting with an expanded move list and the ability to wield secondary weapons like axes and daggers. Regrettably, puzzles start to lose their lustre as the player is forced to backtrack around the castle. Another drag is the intermittent Dahaka real-time chase sequences, where performing one wrong move means having to restart the entire scenario again.

Though not bad by any means, Warrior Within comes up short as a sequel. Then again, The Sands of Time is a tough act to follow.

By Erin Bell



### INFO BOX

- Breathtaking environments
- Intriguing puzzles
- Stiff challenge
- Repetitious
- Stagnant camera
- Music gets grating



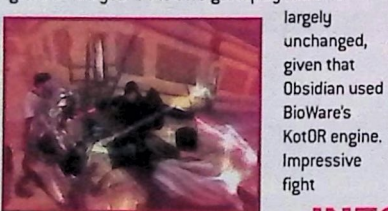
Sands of Time is still the classic. PS2, Xbox, GameCube

## Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords

Publisher: LucasArts Developer: Obsidian Entertainment

Knights of the Old Republic was among the most pleasant gaming surprises of 2003. Not only was it a Star Wars game that didn't suck, but it was a game that rather than basing the action on a particular Star Wars film, transcended its license and left other Star Wars titles in the dust.

Sith Lords follows up on what by many accounts was "game of the year". The core gameplay remains largely unchanged, given that Obsidian used BioWare's KotOR engine. Impressive fight



sequences still hide sophisticated dice-based rules where each offensive or defensive move is a combination of good planning and a virtual dice roll. While KotOR suffered slow framerates and jerky movement when numerous baddies were on screen, the sequel suffers more. Large combat scenes often stutter. Fortunately, since combat is a take on turn-based and can be paused, it's not a terminal diagnosis. Sith Lords isn't as impressive as its parent game owing to the fact that we've seen it (and been blown away) before. However, a complete ground-up rebuild isn't always necessary for a worthy sequel. Such is the case here.

Improvements are subtle but noticeable: new battle forms that can be changed mid-battle depending on the situation, more light sabre modifications and the ability to change party members on the fly. Combine these improvements with an entirely new story and Sith Lords is must-have for RPG and Star Wars fans alike.

By Andrew Moore-Crispin

### INFO BOX

- New style-based fighting
- Excellent story; good/evil choices more weighted
- Poor framerate
- Game glitches



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## Go on, VoIP it!

*If you haven't yet tried out VoIP, chances are you will soon...*

We somehow forgot about voice when the Internet came along and we started e-mailing like crazy – hundreds (and in Bill Gates' case, four million) messages a day, spinning across the universe from computer to computer to computer...

Then, suddenly, VoIP (Voice over Internet protocol) comes along. Not really suddenly, because the hope and promise of talking over the Internet has been around for years. But with the 2003 launch of Skype's peer-to-peer service, the 2004 Canadian roll-out of Primus' and Vonage's VoIP service, and AOL's limited location TotalTalk rollout, along with the anticipated entry of Bell and Rogers, VoIP has become a catch phrase – the Next Big Thing.

### Starting with Skype

So is it really that great? I decided to find out. My first Internet call was done with Skype (www.skype.com). I downloaded the software (launched for PC in August 2003, and for Mac a year later), and called up a friend in Sweden. Just the software, a microphone and speakers (in my case built into the laptop) and I'm talking halfway around the globe – for free!

The connection was relatively clear, and as we spoke we even exchanged files (166MB), and text messages. The next day we tried a three-country conference call, then, on the weekend, I used SkypeOut (the service that keeps Skype afloat, says Skype's Dan Twigg) to call from my computer in Canada to a regular phone in Europe, for just a few cents a minute. With each day I added more people to my contact list, and kept asking friends to sign on (Although seriously, if it took me months to sign on, how can I expect everyone else to jump on immediately?).

Were my contacts available all the time? Hardly. People have jobs, they sleep, and no one spends all day talking – except those individuals who do nothing but Skype. (In fact, for the novice Skype it can come as a bit of a surprise to suddenly receive an

incoming call from an unknown entity. Get out of my computer!). But at least they were there – within reach. And when they weren't, I felt their absence.

### VoIP phones

Next, I had a go with some real VoIP phones (courtesy Primus and Vonage), the kind where you hook up your regular phone to a special telephone adapter connected to your Ethernet cable.

For the user, this means cheaper rates, phone numbers that, like e-mail, have no fixed physical location, and integrated Web interfaces that allow for online call management (what could be better than listening to a voicemail attachment on your computer and then deleting it?)

"The technology is new and it works," says Derek Serianni, a technical sales specialist with Primus Telecommunications Canada. "[People] can customize their communications to themselves." Most VoIP accounts come with two phone lines, and if you're using it in just one room, the setup is a snap. If you decide to go whole hog and give up regular Telco service, you can either go with cordless phones with multiple handsets and multiple extensions, or unplug the whole house jack from the Telco service where it enters your house and plug it into the VoIP adapter. Voila. All your phones will be VoIP.

The VoIP online component allows for a wide range of options. You can forward voice mails, manage contacts, set up groups, and keep a record of all incoming and outgoing calls. In effect, you can manage your phone when you're not on (or even near) it. Since you can choose your phone number (including area code), and take that number with you anywhere in the world, "there is no such thing as long distance anymore," explains Joe Parent, VP of marketing and business development for Vonage Canada.

You could, for example, buy a VoIP adapter with a 613 area code, move to Japan and make calls to Ottawa as if they were local.

Unlike regular phones, VoIP phones do not function during power outages or when the Internet is down, so experts advise keeping a regular telephone line as a backup, having a UPS system, or using the "find me, follow me" service, which predetermines a list of numbers to call, or sends out a call to all numbers in case of emergency.

The emergency 911 service is also an issue. Since the





physical phone could be anywhere, register your location so that 911 knows where to go in case of an emergency.

### So where is VoIP headed?

A recent study by Gartner Dataquest says revenue from the plain old telephone service (POTS) will drop slightly through 2008, while VoIP will climb a hefty 38 per cent over the same period.

"Next year's going to be the break year when people's comfort level increases to a point where they don't question VoIP anymore – they just see it as the next, natural migration," says Frank Panza, director of product management for Telus' IP-One.

According to Parent, "VoIP intelligence" will soon be loaded into handsets, so that you'll just pick up the phone and talk – no terminal adapter needed.

Serianni says we'll also eventually be seeing video, and dual phones, which can be used with either VoIP or traditional lines.

Vonage already has them, and Primus will soon launch "soft phones" which will reside on your notebook and have a Skype-like feel to them, but operate with the phone number you use on your "real" phone.

"It's changing the medium in which we talk," states Serianni.

VoIP to POTS, VoIP on cellular, soft-VoIP. Pretty soon it will be VoIP everywhere.

By Mara Gulens

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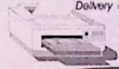
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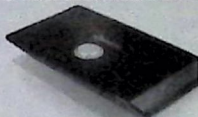
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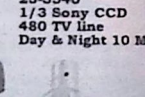
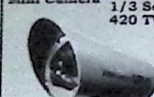


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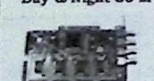
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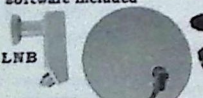
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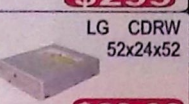
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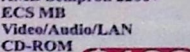


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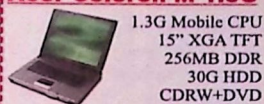
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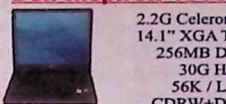
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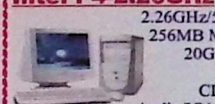
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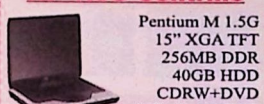
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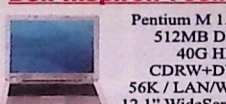
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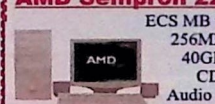
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# Microsoft Encarta Kids

*A great beginning that leaves you wanting more*

Maybe it's because Bill Gates now has kids of his own that the Encarta Reference Library, a popular favourite in the virtual encyclopedia world, finally has a kids section.

It's been a long time coming, and you have to wonder why it took so long for a corporation the size of Microsoft to realize that yes, there are kids on the planet, and yes, they need reference tools just like anyone else – in fact, maybe more so than anyone else.

## Infobox

**Encarta Kids** (part of Encarta Reference Library Premium 2005) – available on CD or DVD.

Ages 7 and up

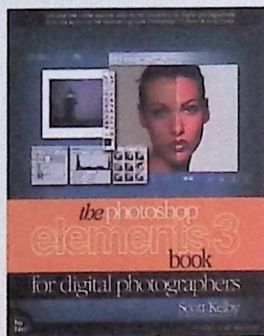
\$99

[www.microsoft.com/encarta](http://www.microsoft.com/encarta)

### Requirements:

Multimedia PC with a Pentium 333MHz or faster processor, Win98 and up, Minimum 64MB RAM for Win98 or WinMe (128MB recommended), minimum 128MB for Win2000 Professional SP3 or WinXP, Up to 430MB available hard-disk space, DVD-ROM drive, minimum 4 MB of video memory.

Encarta Kids requires an additional 330MB available hard-disk space.



Many of the kids reference tools available online have shady consumer associations, and more pop-up advertising than the average adult site, if that's possible. It can also be hard to find stuff. Say, for example, that your child is doing a project on ants and wants to know which ones bite the best.

Google.com gives 8,000,000 hits for "ants", but many of them, surprise, have nothing to do with ants. Kids search site

Yahooligans.com offers up a nar-

rower choice of 33 sites – one of them is a rock band called Alien Ant Farm. Perhaps AskJeeves.com? The first link takes me to a newsy adult site called Myrmecology.org, the next page is "Not Found".

That's when you remember why the expression "let's just go check it out on the Internet" is no longer uttered in your house. In most cases it tends to lead to the following scenario: Your child stands to the side while you surf from site to site, muttering "I'm sure we'll find it soon," and inwardly swearing you'll never show off your Google prowess unless you've bookmarked the sites beforehand.

With Encarta Kids that's not an issue. It's a library for kids and nothing but, and will have something – even if it's not much – on what you're looking for. A search for "ants", for example, actually links to articles and images



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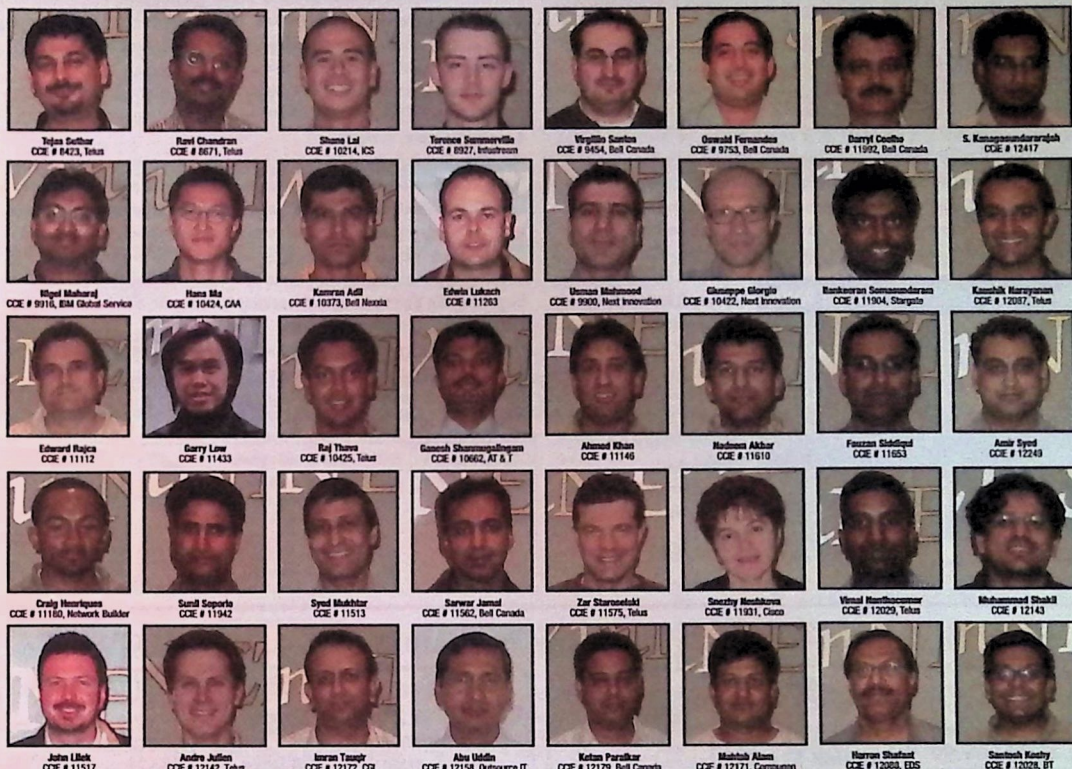
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about ants. It turns out "the army ant can even bite a huge snake." An answer at last!

Some topics, however, will probably leave anyone except junior viewers wanting more. "Autumn leaves", for example, are explained with the following [nothing deleted] text: "There are four seasons: spring, summer, fall, winter. Many leaves change colour in the fall." What happened to the "why"?

Fortunately, it's not all like that, and with an appealing bright orange, yellow and green interface, kids will definitely feel that this is a product for them. The main page features 10 categories – animals, science, sports and recreation, the arts, reading and writing, people, places, history, social studies, and games and fun stuff, all of which link to one another.

Most sections have some Canadian content, although minimal – which will be a bone of contention for some and a giggle for others. For example, in the Hockey section there's no mention that Wayne Gretzky hails from Canada, and in Dance you get a link to the NYC Ballet – perhaps National Ballet of Canada would be more appropriate? I was happy to find Can Lit,

but alas, no Margaret Atwood. And in the game "Name that Prime Minister" Jean Chrétien is associated with the quote "I cut government spending and paid off Canada's debts." What a quote to remember!

Some articles have voice-overs, but not enough.

## Pros and Cons of Encarta Kids

### PROS

Everything in one place  
Very kid friendly  
Easy to use

### CONS

Not enough video and audio  
Needs more games

How many seven year-olds are full-fledged readers? (Of course, you can click on the "read text" menu and listen to your computer's voice – boring and computerish. Must we bring the 1950s into the 21st century?). Since games are integral to learning, it's no surprise that there's a special Games section. "Animals on the Brink" has kids identify animals as extinct, endangered, or alive and well. In the Science Zone kids guess what was invented when (Fire? 500,000 BC. Television? 1920s.) Unfortunately, many of the games can only be played once (if you want to play again, you have the same questions), and there are not enough of them. The same can be said for video. A photo of Finding Nemo just doesn't convey the magic of Film, and why don't we get to hear the Beatles sing? If it's a copyright issue, solve it!

Moreover, in this multimedia age, in a product that really is all about the "wow" of technology, you have to wonder why the use of interactivity has been kept so limited. Perhaps the product was put together quickly (just as Bill was signing off on the final version, his son trundled in and said, "So, Daddy, is there anything for kids this time?"), or maybe Microsoft just needs a reviewer's kick in the butt to confirm that Encarta Kids is a great beginning but that we're already waiting for the next, more enhanced version.

That said, there's currently nothing else like Encarta Kids, and for the time being it's the best, safest and soundest place for kids to start building their knowledge of absolutely everything.

By Mara Gulens

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## January Price Meltdown

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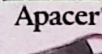
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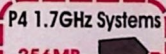
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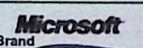
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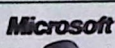
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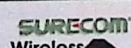
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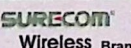
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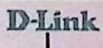
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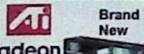
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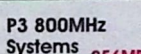
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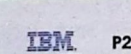
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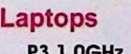
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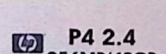
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# USB mass storage

A flash drive by any other name ...

## DiskGO! Flash Drive+Ink Pen

Price: \$50 (from \$US39) as tested

Price per MB: \$1.56

Web site: [www.edgememory.com](http://www.edgememory.com)

Carrying method: tension clip

Dimensions\*: 18mm x 18mm x 145mm

Tested: Flash Drive+Ink Pen 32MB

Connection: USB 2.0

How many times have you lost your favourite pen? Perhaps augmenting

your pen with a USB flash drive containing important data would compel you to keep it close at all times. Then again, perhaps you'll just lose your pen and your valuable data along with it.

While neither a USB flash drive nor a pen takes up too much cargo space in

### Pros:

Extension cable included

"Cool factor" high

Pen itself has a nice feel

### Cons:

No access indicator light

Limited storage capacities (up to

256MB)

Blocks adjacent USB ports

a bag or briefcase, melding the two does have some benefits. Especially if you're partial to pens with some heft to them.

The USB part of the Flash Drive+Ink Pen makes up the top portion – where the spring and button assembly would be found on a standard ball-point – and is threaded to mate with the barrel of the pen. The pen element



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is a pretty standard twist type ballpoint and can be used with or without the USB flash drive portion attached, though without it becomes too short for extended use.

It's a pretty good idea and comes in a heavy black gift box with an extra ballpoint refill – probably owing to the low capacity, seeing as the cartridges are pretty small – which is a nice touch. That said, it's not without problems.

First, to keep with the "executive style" (as referred to in the product literature) there is no access light on the drive. Second, in styling the flash drive to mate with the barrel of the pen, the flash drive itself ends up being fatter than others and can block adjacent USB ports.

While there are more functional USB flash drives out there (see USB flash drives: Setting up a sneaker net, Oct. 2004, also archived at [www.hubcanada.com](http://www.hubcanada.com)), the Flash Drive+Ink Pen's novelty factor is high. DiskGO! has

branding options and volume discounts, which means business owners can plaster a company logo on the pen and send it out to clients. I wouldn't personally pony up for an augmented pen and USB flash drive, but would be pretty happy to receive one as tradeshow swag.

### DiskGO! USB Watch Drive

Price: \$84 (from \$US65) as tested

Price per MB: \$0.66

Web site: [www.edgememory.com](http://www.edgememory.com)

Carrying method: wrist strap

Dimensions (face)\*: 39mm x 18mm x 55mm

Tested: USB Watch Drive 128MB

Connection: USB 2.0

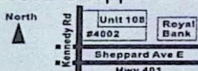
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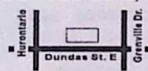
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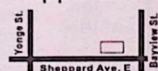
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By Andrew Moore-Crispin

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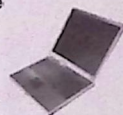
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# Montreal Game Summit

*shines spotlight on Quebec's developer community*

The first annual Montreal Game Summit held in November was more successful than event organizers had hoped, attracting more than 500 gaming industry professionals, including the minds behind cutting-edge games like Half-Life 2, Halo 2, and Splinter Cell 3.

"The Summit is a lot like the Game Developers Conference," said event organizer Jean-Pierre Faucher, referring to the videogame industry's largest gathering of developers from around the world held annually in California. He added that the Montreal event has more local ambitions. According to Faucher, the main goals of the Summit are to cultivate workers within Quebec and draw attention to the province's booming videogame industry. To achieve these objectives, the Summit had to bring in top industry professionals from across North America. It succeeded, attracting the likes of Half-Life series creator Bill Van Buren from Washington, and Ray Muzyka, founder of Edmonton-based BioWare, the company behind such games as Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic and the highly anticipated Jade Empire.

The two day event consisted of lectures, workshops, and seminars delivered by respected industry veterans including Van Buren and Muzyka. Topics ranged from technical analyses of the physics software engines used to create believable worlds that players can interact with to more philosophical discussions about how game designers are inspired for the games they develop simply by looking at the world around them.

One of the keynote speakers was native Montrealeur Michel Bastien, who now works at Washington-based Bungie, makers of the hyper-successful Halo franchise.

Bastien wasn't just there to speak, but also to learn. "If you can get three or four good ideas from a lecture that you can apply to your own work, then it's a good lecture," said Bastien. "That's what I got from Ray [Muzyka]'s talk on how BioWare approaches game development."

After his presentation Muzyka expressed mutual respect for Bastien's lecture and noted that he also felt as though he was there to learn. "People here have been very warm and open," said Muzyka. "It encourages you to speak more about your own processes. In the end you get back more than what you put in."

"This kind of an event can inspire people," chipped in Van Buren of Valve Software. "We get to see that the competition isn't our adversary. We can share what we know."

But the Montreal Game Summit isn't just about sharing information; it's also about fostering Quebec's industry by putting Montreal in the lime-light for the world's game development community to see.

Martin Tremblay, general manager of Montreal-based Ubisoft (the developers behind several popular franchises including Splinter Cell and Prince of Persia), saw the event as an opportunity to demonstrate his company's role as a leader in the industry, and also a chance to show the world that Montreal is a hub of activity in the videogame industry.

"Montreal's gaming community has been working together on the Summit," said Tremblay. "The Summit benefits every member of our community by positioning [Montreal] as a leading city in the game development business."

"The industry [in Montreal] isn't as well known as it should be," added Faucher. "Venture capitalists aren't aware of the opportunities." He believes that the Summit will help increase awareness of the business opportunities available in Montreal.

Several game studios are already located in the city. In addition to Ubisoft, Montreal is also home to a large Electronic Arts office as well as studios for many smaller companies.

Muzyka believes that the Montreal game development community will continue to flourish and grow thanks to the Summit. "The Montreal game industry is already exciting, and the Summit just adds to that feeling," said Muzyka, who mentioned that his company, BioWare, has mulled over the possibility of one day opening shop in Quebec's largest city.

With the Summit's first year behind it and the event an irrefutable success, Faucher hopes for even bigger things in years to come. "In the future, we'd like to see representation from more countries."

If the buzz created by this year's event reaches as far as he hopes, next year's Summit may well attract developers and speakers from around the globe, including top developers from industry hubs in the UK and Japan.

By Chad Sapieha





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# Preserving yesterday with today's technology

*"Analog-to-digital" devices help back-up aging footage*

The almighty DVD player has taken over the living room, so chances are your dusty video tape collection is lying in a closet somewhere, perhaps beside your old Hi-8 or VHS-C camcorder footage. Let's face it – tape is out and discs are in.



## Why back it all up?

It's no surprise many are looking to convert old camcorder footage or VCR tapes into a digital format. Not only are cassettes bulky, and degrade over time and use, but watching a wedding video, family vacation or a baby's first steps is far more convenient on DVD (anyone remember fast-forwarding and rewinding?).

Though analog-to-digital conversion services are available in most major

cities, doing it at home can be far less expensive over time. Using a PC also makes it possible to edit the footage, add special effects and copy it to disc for friends and family.

And believe it or not, you don't need an engineering degree to pull this off. The following is a look at your options on backing up tape onto DVD.

## Option 1: Fancy video cards

PC users may already own a video card that comes with audio and video input jacks, such as many of the ATI "All-in-Wonder" cards. To check, look at the back of the PC where the monitor cable is plugged in. If you see multi-coloured input jacks, you're in luck. All that is required is an "RCA" (a.k.a. composite) cord (or if your camcorder supports it, an S-video cord for better-looking results) sold at your local electronics retailer to connect the old camcorder or VCR to the computer (more on this in a moment). A recommended video card is the ATI All-in-Wonder 9600 XT (approx \$360). Rather than the input jacks being on the card itself, a small dongle plugs into the video card that is used to connect to the camcorder or VCR. Because the footage is copied to a computer's hard drive, a CD or DVD recorder ("burner") is required to transfer this converted video onto a disc to play in a DVD player.

## Option 2: Dedicated video capture cards

Instead of replacing the entire video card, a "video capture card" may be the best solution. Base models start at \$80, but the catch is you may need to open the back of your PC to install the card into an available PCI

slot. Some external models can be plugged into a computer's USB port. A CD is included in the box with software to back up the taped footage.

Pinnacle's Dazzle DVD 80 Digital Video Creator is our pick – it includes a handy connection box that sits on your desk and fancy video editing and CD/DVD burning software. Similar to option 1, a CD or DVD burner is needed to create a disc to watch on a DVD player.

Some products, such as the HP Movie Writer and the Sony DVDirect, let users connect a camcorder directly to an external DVD burner.

## Option 3: Straight to DVD, without the PC

Starting at \$200, TV-based DVD player/recorder units cost more than regular DVD players since they can record television programming onto blank DVDs. Many users aren't aware they can also back up old tapes. The rear of the unit contains audio and video input jacks, so you can connect a camcorder or VCR to convert tapes to DVD. Note: this is a straight "dub" of the tape, therefore editing isn't possible. A decent pick is the Panasonic DMR-E55S (\$449), a DVD recorder with plenty of bells and whistles.

## How to do it

Regardless of the method you've chosen, the actual process of backing up tapes onto DVD is more or less the same.

Users will first need their old camcorder or VCR, and all the taped footage they want to convert. The abovementioned RCA cords (red, yellow and white) or an S-video cable (circular, with little "teeth" lining the inside) are required to connect the camcorder to the PC or DVD recorder. If these cables are not included in the box, they can be purchased at most electronics stores.

Simply connect the cords from the output jacks of the camcorder or VCR to the input jacks of the PC's video card/video capture card, or the DVD recorder. If this is on a computer, the software, once installed, will prompt users to press "play" on the source (camcorder or VCR) and "record" or "capture" on the computer at the same time in order to copy it to the hard drive (or DVD).

Copying footage from a camcorder or VCR onto a computer can really eat up hard drive space – depending on the chosen quality, between 3.5 and 4 Gigabytes for every hour you record. Once it is copied to a DVD (about two hours worth), it can be deleted.

Lastly, for computer users it is now possible to edit the transferred footage if desired. A number of clever software packages are on the market that can be used to cut the footage or add fun special effects such as captions, music and Hollywood-style transition sequences. Windows XP has a built-in utility, Windows Movie Maker, that can perform some of these functions. Once completed, it can now be copied onto a CD or DVD for playback in a DVD player.

By Marc Saltzman





# Building the Ultimate Gaming PC: Part Three

There was a lot to do in preparing this installment of Building the Ultimate Gaming PC. I had to install the motherboard (a.k.a. the "mobo"), the CPU and CPU cooling fan, and plug lots of things in. [Previous installments at [www.hubcanada.ca](http://www.hubcanada.ca)].

## Step Four Selecting the Mobo:

In my first two installments, I spoke of using the Intel D925XCV motherboard as the home for our Intel 3.6 GHz Pentium 4 EE (Extreme Edition) CPU chip. However, between then and now Abit ([www.abit.com](http://www.abit.com)) sent me a  $\mu$ Guru AAB-3rd Eye mobo. Besides offering basically the same performance as the Intel D925XCV, the AAB's  $\mu$ Guru technology optimizes CPU performance for gamers. It even comes with an external "Guru Clock" that allows gamers to "overclock" their CPU (push it faster than its rated speed) with the push of a button. This "Quick OC", as Abit calls it, is like hitting the gas for a quick burst of speed.

Add the fact that the Guru Clock monitors and displays the computer's operating temperature and voltage, and the Abit AAB-3rd Eye seemed the obvious choice for the Ultimate Gaming PC. In making this call, I mean no disrespect to the Intel D925XCV: this is still a top-flight mobo, which I plan to use in another project. Meanwhile, my chip of choice remains the Intel 3.6 GHz Pentium 4 EE CPU.

## Step Five: Installing the Mobo

Putting in the Abit mobo was a simple yet tricky operation. I had to be very careful not to hit anything as I angled it into the case and up against the faceplate. (This was the Abit faceplate; I had originally installed the Intel unit, but replaced it after deciding to use the AAB.) Once in place, the AAB mobo was gently pressed up against the faceplate as the nine mounting screws went into place.

To get at all of the mobo mounting holes, I had to remove the power supply. Actually, I ended up removing and then reattaching the power supply repeatedly during this part of the build, until I got smart and left it

unattached.

The screws went through special metal-covered holes marked on the motherboard, and were screwed into metal standoff posts provided with the Mutant Mod case. However, the machine screws supplied by Mutant

Mods didn't fit the posts; we had to search our toolbox for suitable screws before we could proceed. Note to all PC builders: make sure you have a supply of computer machine screws handy before you start!

## Step Six: Installing the CPU

This was the part I was afraid of: making a wrong move that would destroy the brain of my Ultimate Gaming PC! As a result, I went very slowly and carefully, beginning by lifting the CPU holding clamp. In particular, I made sure not to touch any of the pins in the mount or the underside of the CPU chip itself in order to avoid dirt and damage.

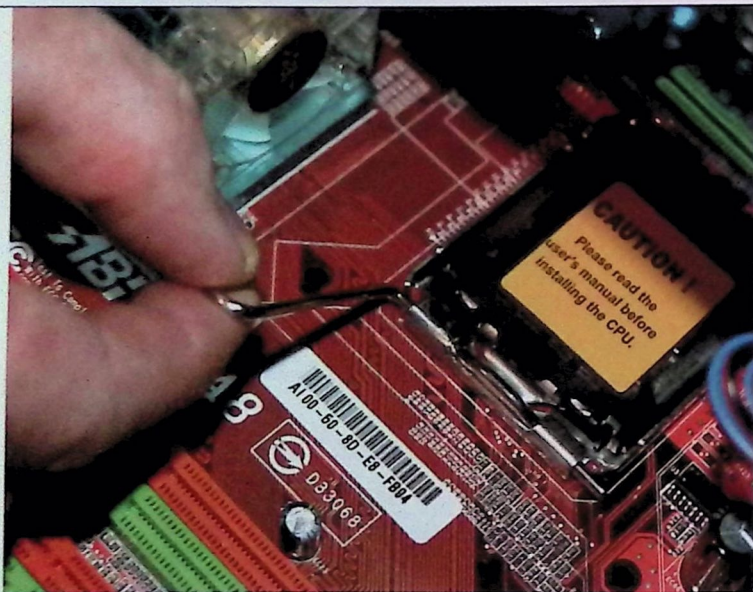
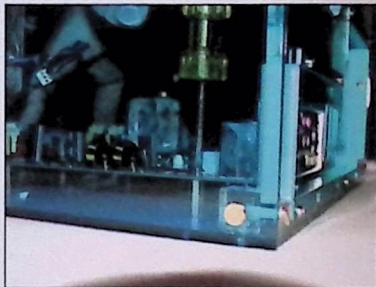
Unfortunately, the CPU clamp on this board was rather tightly locked in place. I eventually got it open by pulling it slightly to the side, then levering it back. I then removed the protective cover from the clamp mount — it is the plate marked with the yellow sticker, which I first removed by mistake — and prepared to insert the Intel CPU chip.

Holding my breath, I visually lined up the two notches on the chip's body with the notches in the CPU mount, then gingerly put it into place. It fit perfectly, thank heavens!

Closing the lid was another problem. It was so stiff that I feared I was going to snap the CPU in two! After double-checking the lid for obstructions, I pushed the lever down and locked it in place. Mission accomplished!

## Step Seven: Mounting the CPU Cooling Fan

With the Intel chip in place, the next step was to mount the CPU cooling fan on top. First, I put some of the specially supplied grease on top of the CPU. This helps ensure that heat is efficiently transferred from the chip to the cooling fins. To smooth it out, I took advice from the MaximumPC Guide to Building a Dream PC handbook, and used a plastic-covered business card to spread it evenly. Once the CPU was "greased" I put the CPU fan in place, taking care to ensure that its wires traveled through the fins to its base. The fan comes with four plastic mounting posts. I pressed them down until each one clicked into place, then turned each head 90 degrees to lock them.







### Step Eight: Inserting the Memory Modules

A computer is nothing without memory. Our Ultimate Gaming PC is fortunately blessed with a pair of matched Corsair XMS2 Pro Series DDR2 1 GB memory modules, which are designed for gaming. While installing them, I was very careful to line the modules up the right way, using the offset notches on each one. Note that the Abit board comes with four memory slots: two orange OR green mounts - not a combination of the two.

### Step Nine: Connecting the Power Supply

Then the Abit mobo instructions said it was time to start connecting the power supply. The mobo apparently comes with two power connectors built in: one with 24 pins and the other with four.

Well, the Reactor power supply had the right four pin female connector for the mobo, but the other one only had 20. According to the Abit manual this was okay, but the instructions it offered as to which pins to connect (and which not to) made no sense to me. Eventually, I moved the 20 pin female connector around until I was sure it only fit one way on the mobo, and pushed it into place.

Next, I connected the plugs for the front panel buttons and LEDs. You may notice that these haven't been mentioned in this series before. The reason is that although this front panel mini-board was included with the Mutant Mods case, it wasn't covered in its instructions. No matter: I mounted it in place and then carefully plugged the wires in place, using the names clearly marked on them and the mobo manual to guide me. My only concern is whether I put them the right way around. We'll see if I didn't later on, when I push the Power button and nothing happens.

Next Time: The Finishing Touches

In Part Four I expect to finish building the Ultimate Gaming Machine. Part Five is the fun part where I load on the software and then spend hours correcting everything I did wrong!

By James Careless  
Photography by Susan Trotter

James Careless has reached that naive newbie stage where he is starting to think he knows what he's doing. No worries; he'll soon learn the error of his ways!

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Digital video cameras are well established now, and new models are quite affordable these days. Those models, while quite compact, are really fairly basic: they record video to MiniDV cassettes and can capture low-resolution snapshots to a removable memory card, but have few extras. While the cameras are perfect for those who just want to turn them on and start shooting, those looking for something a bit meatier may want to look into other options.

There are a few cameras out there with features that will appeal to those who are more familiar with professional-level video.

Higher end models may have 3CCD sensors for better colour reproduction, or they may shoot in 16:9 widescreen mode. Still others combine the best of point-and-shoot digital video and point-and-shoot digital photography. And for something even more different, a growing number of digital video cameras are skipping the tape altogether, and recording straight to DVD media.

Here are a few DV cameras with a twist:



# DV CAMERAS

*With a twist*



## Canon Optura Xi

www.canon.ca Estimated price: \$1,599

**Pro:** great manual features, multiple shooting modes, pro features, 11x optical zoom

**Con:** small SD card, photo quality not great

While Canon has a lot of affordable cameras for those who are just entering the world of digital video, the company is also able to draw on its many years of professional-level cameras - Canon cameras are found in many television studios - to create this lower-cost model for those who want a few more pro features.

The Optura Xi has a manual focus ring at the front for up-close shooting. There are multiple shooting modes, including aperture or shutter-priority modes, as well as night mode, spotlight mode, and sand/snow mode. There are also other higher-end features like 16:9 widescreen shooting mode, manual exposure control and zebra pattern for gauging exposure. There's so much here that the manual is about 170 pages, and you'll want to consult it to discover all the features.

The camera also takes snapshots at resolutions up to two megapixels, and saves them to the SecureDigital card. There's an 8 MB card included, but don't worry about a larger SD card unless you're really stuck for a still camera, because the image quality is only so-so. For still photos, the camera has a built-in flash, and an accessory shoe on the top also accepts Canon attachments. A remote control is included.

## Panasonic PV-GS400

www.panasonic.ca Estimated price: \$2,499

**Pro:** 3CCD design, manual focus/zoom ring

**Con:** pricey!, 4 megapixel shots not great

Wow! At \$2,499 this model isn't exactly cheap, but one of the main reasons for the inflated price is the camera's 3CCD design. Normally only found on pro-level cameras, the 3CCD feature splits the video into the three discrete colours (red/green/blue) for better colour control, and ultimately a better picture. The camera also has a zebra pattern for gauging exposure, manual shutter/iris control and an easily accessible white balance control.

An interesting feature of this camera is the ability to use it from the front or the back. There's a ring around the lens for manual focus control, but with the press of a button it becomes a manual zoom control instead, for those who don't like the jog control near the back of the camera. There's also a record button along the barrel of the lens, placed just in front of the handgrip, which means you can activate with your pinky, or with your left hand if it's wrapped around the barrel of the lens for focus/stability.

One complaint: though the camera takes four megapixel still images (and saves them to SecureDigital), the images aren't the same quality you'd get from a discrete four megapixel camera.

## Samsung DuoCam SC-D6040

www.samsung.ca Estimated price: \$1,099

**Pro:** both DV and still camera in single body, easy menu system, manual control

**Con:** awkward button placement, still cam harder to use than stand-alone model

Like the first version of the DuoCam, this one has separate digital video and still camera lenses in the same device, but now the two are one on top of the other instead of in a spinning lens compartment. Not only does this new configuration make the camera a lot easier to use - you only spin a selector switch instead of the entire lens assembly - it also makes the camera a lot smaller and lighter. Because the still camera component is still discrete from the DV component, the camera takes better pictures than DV cams with still photo capabilities. It even has a built-in flash.

Of course, combining two gadgets into one body has drawbacks. The still camera isn't quite as easy to use as a stand-alone still camera, and with so much onboard, certain buttons are awkward to use (including the record

button, which tucks up right against the battery). It's also bulkier than the new compact DV cameras, but considering the inclusion of the 4.13 megapixel camera, it's still quite compact. For the price, it's a great deal.

## DVD Cameras

If you're used to regular MiniDV cameras, get ready for a bit of re-learning. DVD cameras don't use tapes for recording, they use - surprise! - small recordable DVD discs. While these mini 80mm discs top out at 30 minutes per side, you can "finalize" the discs right on the camcorder, and immediately pop them into a DVD player.

There are two different ways to get discs into DVD camcorders: Some of the camcorders feature a central spindle, like those found in portable CD or DVD players, and you snap the disc right in. Others force you to place the disc into a cartridge first - a bit of a throwback to the early days of DVD-RAM. It's not a huge problem to get discs in and out, but if you break or lose the cartridge, you won't be able to shoot video.

Because these cams use DVD media, they typically don't have a FireWire connector to your PC. You can transfer video over USB 2.0, or just move the video on the DVD media. The good news is that if you're using rewritable media, you can also do some limited editing right on the camera, including splitting scenes, fades/wipes, and deleting. In many cases, you can even use them as external DVD burners when hooked to the PC.

## Hitachi DVD Cam DZ-MV580A

www.hitachi.ca Estimated price: \$1,099

**Pro:** DVD-R/RAM compatible, 16:9 widescreen mode, saves photos to either DVD or SecureDigital

**Con:** disc requires cartridge, no SD card included

The first company we ever saw a DVD camcorder from, Hitachi is still going strong with the DVD Cam line. This camera uses either DVD-RAM or DVD-R blank media, and can record in 16:9 widescreen mode. The tradeoff is that the camera only has a 10x optical zoom. (The sister DZ-MV550A model has 18x optical, but no widescreen mode.) The DVD Cam can shoot one megapixel still images, and saves them to either DVD or SecureDigital card; if you want to save your DVD space for video you'll have to invest a bit extra, because there's no blank SD card included.

## Panasonic DVD Diga VDR-50

www.panasonic.ca Estimated price: \$999

**Pro:** DVD-R/RAM compatible, 18x optical zoom

**Con:** disc requires cartridge, no SD card included

Panasonic has two new DVD camcorders on the market under their Diga sub-brand. The VDR-50 is the lower-priced of the two, but it has a 18x optical zoom onboard. The next model up, the VDR-70, only has 10x optical zoom but can shoot in 16:9 widescreen mode. The Diga will take 640x480-resolution still photographs, and can save them to the DVD media or an optional SecureDigital card.

## Sony Handycam DCR-DVD201

www.sonystyle.ca Estimated price: \$1,199

**Pro:** spindle-based disc load system, compatible with DVD-R/RW

**Con:** awkward controls, no removable photo memory

This is one of the more compact DVD camcorders. Overall, it's a nicely-designed camera, though the smaller size makes some of the controls more awkward to use (including the record button, which is snug up against the battery). Oddly, even though the camera saves both photographs and movies onto the DVD media - there's no MemoryStick slot - and despite having to switch from movie mode to photo mode using the selector dial on the side, there are still two buttons - one for photo and one for video. The Sony model isn't compatible with DVD-RAM, but uses the DVD-RW format instead, which is cheaper and more widely-available.

By Sean Carruthers



# Digital Photography Tutorial 12

## New Year's resolution: Get organized

Getting organized is a popular New Year's resolution, and a fitting one if your collection of digital photographs is getting out of hand. There are many good and inexpensive products available and some have gone through recent revisions. ACD Systems is now up to version 7 of its ACDSee cataloguing software. Paint Shop Photo Album from Jasc (which was recently purchased by Corel Corp.) is now at version 5. And the Windows version of Adobe PhotoShop Elements 3 includes Photo Organizer, which was formerly known as Photoshop Album (sorry Mac users, only the Windows version includes Photo Organizer but Photo Album 2.0 is still available as a separate product).

### Unique interfaces

These packages have a core of functions that are similar, but the way they accomplish tasks is often quite different. ACDSee's interface will be immediately familiar to many because it is similar to the multi-paned Windows Explorer. The navigation pane defaults to folder view, so you can quickly navigate the directory tree of wherever you've stored your images. You can also navigate by date, keyword or a number of other variables.

Photo Organizer is accessed as a sub-task within Elements 3 (in the previous version you could launch it as a separate application), and has a clean, modern interface that looks like it used Mac OS X for inspiration. The ribbon gauge along the top has become a signature feature of Photo Organizer: a timeline organizer. Move the slider to any date and the window is refreshed to display all the images taken on that date.

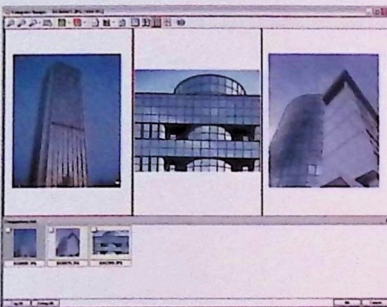
Paint Shop Photo Album 5 is somewhere in between. The basic layout is a two-paned window similar to ACDSee, but stylistically it resembles the Adobe product. The navigation pane defaults to folder view, but buttons allow you to quickly switch to date view or keyword view.

### Common functions

Speaking of keywords, this is a basic yet powerful feature in all these packages. Some people try to cram an essay about a photo into its file name, but assigning keywords is a much more efficient way to categorize. Any given photo, even a casual family snapshot, can be classified in more than one

way, and keywords allow this flexibility. The benefit of this becomes clear when it comes time to finding an image. For example, a single family photo could be assigned the words vacation, Banff, elk and Grandpa, and could later be found by searching on any of those words.

Assigning keywords can be tedious, but organizers allow you to assign them to groups of photos simultaneously. They will also maintain a list of words you're using, so that over time you don't run into the prob-



Top: ACDSee 7

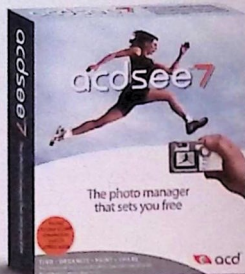
Bottom: Adobe Photoshop Elements



lem of not being able to find images because you've used the keyword "trip" on some and "travel" on others.

Another useful set of features common to all these packages is batch processing. If you have images in a variety of sizes and need to make them a common dimension (for posting online, for example) the batch-resizing tool automates this procedure. Batch renaming allows you to take a series of related photos and give them a common name, such as Sarah's 4th Birthday 01, Sarah's 4th Birthday 02, etc. These are some of the more common tools, but there are many others that make it much easier to keep track of the photos you've taken.

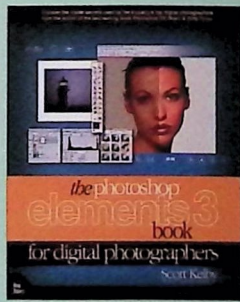
By David Tanaka



## The Photoshop Elements 3 Book for Digital Photographers

By Scott Kelby  
New Riders, paperback,  
431 pages  
ISBN-0-321-26905-5  
Price: \$49.99

Photoshop CS is pricey, but you'll find at least a dozen new books at any given time devoted to it. For other image editors, the resources are not nearly as bountiful, so it's good to see The Photoshop Elements 3 Book for Digital Photographers hit the bookstore shelves. At \$140, Elements 3 is affordable, and this book will help photographers get the most from it. Unlike many books that essentially rewrite the user manual, this book takes a task-based approach. It also uses plain language: what could be simpler than "Straightening Crooked Photos" or "Fixing Areas that are Too Bright." If you can afford just one book on Photoshop Elements 3, this one is highly recommended.





# DECEMBER PHOTO SPREE WINNER

## THE WINNER:

Congratulations to **Eric TaeHoon Eom** of Vancouver, BC whose photograph titled "A Dancer in the Night of Parade" wins our Night Life-themed bi-monthly Photo Spree contest.

Eric used a Nikon D100 to capture the image and made minor modifications in Adobe Photoshop CS.

For submitting the winning image, Eric wins a Lexmark P915 Home Photo Printer with an eye-catching 2.5-inch colour LCD screen for quick and easy PC-free photo printing. The display is also put to use in PC photo printing, displaying on-screen image previews and a count-down timer.

The last Photo Spree net another almost overwhelming response. Thanks to all entrants for sending us your Night Life-themed pictures ... the birthday party snaps and pictures of the family dog are nice too, but alas, aren't eligible to win.

This bi-monthly Photo Spree contest theme is "Ice." Obviously, the theme is up for some interpretation so surprise us!



Grand Prize Winner



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THE CHALLENGE: Ice (use your imagination)

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The all-new Lexmark P915 Home Photo Printer makes printing photos a snap. Able to generate six-colour 4" x 6" borderless photos in as little as 38 seconds - with or without a PC - the P915 uses Lexmark's new Evercolor archival ink and comes with on-board camera card readers, a PictBridge port, Imaging Studio software and a large 2.5-inch colour LCD display with on-screen print previews and a handy count-down timer.

LEXMARK



**THE RULES:** You must use a digital camera to capture the subject. Work can be submitted via email ([contest@ppublishing.ca](mailto:contest@ppublishing.ca)). Accompanying your photo should be the make and model of the camera you used, the names of any software you used to modify the image and, if possible, the f/stop and shutter speed you used to take the photo.

Submit your photographs, along with the information from the form below, by February 21, 2005. You can submit up to three photographs, all of which must be accompanied by a submission form. Entries must be submitted via email. Files should be no bigger than 500 KB and no smaller than 300 KB. One photo per email.

**Contest Rules:** Prizes must be claimed by March 21, 2005. Winners must provide valid identification upon claiming prize. The prizes awarded are not transferable and cannot be redeemed for cash. To enter and to be eligible to win, persons must be residents of Canada, and not employees or be domiciled with an employee of Piccolo Publishing, its affiliate companies, or advertising or promotional agencies. The winners will be selected by HUB on February 25, 2005 from among all eligible entries received on or before contest close date. Winners will be contacted by telephone or email. In the event that they cannot be contacted within the first week following the contest another entrant will be selected. All entries become the property of HUB and may be used in subsequent advertisements for the contest. All entries must be submitted by their artist and must be original work.

HUB's Photo Spree contest form. All submissions must contain this information. Send to [contest@ppublishing.ca](mailto:contest@ppublishing.ca)

Deadline: February 21, 2005

Name: .....

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Title of Entry: .....

Camera Used: .....

Software Used: .....



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